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CONFERENCE *connection*

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SOUTHEAST CONFERENCE, UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

November 1, 2019

A Season of Giving Thanks

A few years ago, a local church in another conference declared November to be the liturgical “Season of Giving Thanks.” They created special paraments for the sanctuary and a stole for the pastor of orange and brown; decorated the sanctuary; and designed worship themes with this special focus from All Saints Day (November 1) until Advent. This special season resulted in a lot of creativity and energy!

As I think of the month of November, this makes sense to me. We begin with All Saints Day when we express thanks for those who have been important to us individually and to our churches (of course, if you are from our UCC German Evangelical tradition, this is often done with a similar celebration of Totenfest, the last Sunday of the liturgical year on Nov. 24). This is the time when we are reminded that we have been shaped and blessed by those who came before us. We are thankful!



For many churches, November is Stewardship Month – also a time for giving thanks! It is a time to recognize and celebrate the impact of our local church in our lives and the wider community while looking ahead with plans for the coming year. Too often we associate stewardship with money: making financial pledges and/or creating budgets. Yet even as we consider our anticipated giving, is that not a testament to our thankfulness for our community of faith? The sharing of our financial resources is an indication of our gratefulness and the joy of being part of what is often an imperfect community of disciples. As we give thanks for what has been, there is also a spirit of gratitude and hopefulness for the possibilities God will place before us in the coming year.

In the midst of the challenges that we face, in the midst of the worries and concerns that we have for our country and countries around the world, scripture reminds us to always give thanks. We give thanks to an all-loving God who sees beyond our limited sight and provides us with hope and reassurance of God's constant love.

Blessings, Char Burch

News from the Conference Office

From the Generosity Coordinator

"Jesus said unto him, 'If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.' But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions."

In a world where people determine their self-worth by their net worth, the offer of Jesus seems unrealistic, unreasonable, and is most often rejected. We walk away from self-sacrifice with great emptiness, for with all of the things we possess in life, without Christ and others, we still have little or nothing to live for.



We so appreciate all the ways that you continue to support this conference in your service, dedication, and support. We are so GRATEFUL that you all made it possible to reach our goals for 2019. God is still in the blessing business.

Blessings as we continue to journey...TOGETHER...
Min. Carrole

UCC Ministers Support in Middle Tennessee

On Thursday, November 14th, from 6-8 pm clergy from Middle Tennessee are invited to join together in Nashville. We are beginning some conversation about how we might support one another, or teach one another, as we seek to offer a progressive Christian voice with one another and our communities. We will have a short Taize style worship, followed by a bring your own supper and conversation. Come to Howard Congregational Church, UCC, on 2802 Buchanan Street in Nashville. We

hope you can be here! Contact [Jean Norton](#) for more information.



“What Makes Us One?” The Fall Meeting of the “Living Waters Association”

by Rev. John Gill

Clergy, delegates, and members from 14 churches gathered at The United Church of Cookeville, TN on October 11-12 for the annual Fall Meeting of the Western Association (formerly the AL-TN-MS-FL Association). At a time of deep division in our world, we came together to tell the story that makes us one – and how it is expressed in scripture and in the many ministries of love, healing, and hope taking place in our churches across the region.

[Read more on our website.](#)

2020 Annual Meeting Logo Contest

We are getting excited in the Southeast Conference for our 2020 Annual Meeting in Montgomery Alabama June 19th-20 with Rev. Traci Blackmon as our Guest. ARE YOU? Here is one way that you can help us get others excited to join us this year to make our Annual Meeting wonderful.

We need you to help us coming up with a unique design/logo centered around this year's theme: “Reflecting on Our Past, Focusing on Our Future” (1 Corinthians 12:12). **The deadline to submit your entry is December**

17th, 2019 at midnight. All submissions must be in JPEG format. [Please upload your entry here.](#) The Annual Meeting Planning Committee will judge the entries in December and the winner will be announced in January.

Ordination for Stephanie Milton

You're invited to the ordination of Stephanie Milton on Sunday, November 17 at 3:00 p.m. at First Congregational Church, UCC in Atlanta. Stephanie has been called to serve as the facilitator of the college ministry at First Church, and serves as a chaplain fellow in the VA system in Atlanta. Please join us at 103 Courtland Avenue in Atlanta for this ordination.



Prayer List

We are continuing the process of praying for authorized ministers, congregations, and ministry groups throughout 2019. We encourage you to include these prayer requests in your local church newsletter, share them with your prayer circle, and include them in your own prayers.

Week of November 4

- Howard Congregational UCC; Nashville, Tennessee
- Kathy Clark
- Dahron Johnson
- Ann Schoup
- Heather Fosburgh

Week of November 11

- Covenant Community Church; Center Point, Alabama

- Lawrence Clark
- James Johnson
- Bruce Schoup
- Jan Whiteman

Prayer Concerns

- We celebrate with **Rev. Raymonda (Ray) and Crystal Speller** as, together with big sister Christiana big brother Christopher Josiah, they welcomed the newest member of their family, Clayton Micah-Emmanuel Speller on October 23.
- We celebrate with **Rev. Kimble Parker Sorrells and Shelby Smith** as they welcomed Evie Parker into the world on October 18.
- We pray for **Rev. Gail McGill** for the death of her husband.

Churches in Transition

Central Congregational, Atlanta, GA; First Congregational, Birmingham AL; Pilgrimage, Marietta GA; First Congregational, Savannah GA; Trinity Congregational, Athens AL; Peace Church, Clemson SC

News from the Wider Church



Women's Retreat

by C. L. "Curly" Stumb, Southern Conference

"The world needs us to be who we are," Rev. Mary Schaller Blaufuss (D.Min.) said to women at the Southern Region Women's Retreat / Strong Sisters' Stories. "The world doesn't always allow us to live up to our potential."

Eighty-eight persons from four conferences in the Southeast Region of the UCC journeyed to Blowing Rock Conference Center, as if on a spiritual

pilgrimage, seeking new heights in their lives. Read all about the retreat [on our website](#).

Free "Facing Your Church's Uncertain Future" Webinar

Is your congregation dealing with questions about your church building and property? Does your church building help or hinder your church mission? Join a zoom webinar [Facing Your Church Building's Uncertain Future: A Conversation](#) with Rev. Patrick Duggan, Executive Director and Rev. David Schoen from the UCC Church Building & Loan Fund on Tuesday, Nov. 12 at 3 PM ET.

The conversation will explore missional options for rethinking, repurposing, relocating, and/or relinquishing church buildings. as well as helpful practices for engaging in discernment, conversation, decision-making and planning. Participants can choose to receive a copy of Facing Your Church's Uncertain Future resource as part of the [registration](#) fee.



PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc. Celebrates Achievements, Sets Goals For 2020

by Rev. Ginnie Ferrell and Dr. Marian R. Plant

PATHWAYS Theological Education, Inc. was fortunate to have Rev. Char Burch, Transitional Conference Minister for the SEC UCC, lead a September

day-long retreat for the PATHWAYS Board of Directors at First Congregational Church, UCC, Atlanta, GA. It was a day when creative juices flowed as Char helped us stay on track with identifying our assets and energies which we can invest in the work of PATHWAYS. She helped us to articulate our goals for the next year as we fleshed out innovative ways to reach out to new participants. [Read more on our website.](#)

\$250 Match Grant Available for CWS Buckets, Kits

United Church of Christ congregations and other UCC groups assembling CWS Emergency Cleanup Buckets and Hygiene Kits have until December 31 to stretch their own cash and in-kind contributions for stocking up these supplies in great demand following hurricanes, flooding and other disasters.

UCC Disaster Ministries offers matching grants of up to \$250 each on a first-come, first-served basis to qualifying applicants. Priority is given to groups assembling the cleanup buckets. Year-end 2019 is fast approaching so apply today! [Click here for full information and an application!](#)

News from our Local Congregations



Spirit of the Cross Celebrates “Pink Sunday”

Spirit of the Cross Church (UCC) in Huntsville, Alabama, held its annual Pink Sunday service on October 20 in recognition of Breast Cancer Awareness

Month. Hope was the theme of the worship service as congregants dressed in pink. During the service, the congregation honored those fighting breast cancer, rededicated themselves to advocate for better healthcare, and remembered those who lost their battle with the disease. Information about breast cancer, screening, and exams was also shared. After the service, Spirit of the Cross, along with Thrive Alabama and the local YMCA, held a community-wide health fair in a city park that adjoins the church's property.

First Congregational Church hosts Atlanta Music Festival

The Atlanta Music Festival is an annual event that draws on concert music and spirituals of African Americans, an enduring legacy now shared throughout the world. This year the festival returns to its historic roots at First Congregational Church and brings back the Fisk Jubilee Singers who sang in the original festival in 1910. Saturday, Nov. 2, 7:30 p.m. in the sanctuary of First Congregational Church, UCC in downtown Atlanta, 105 Courtland Street, NE. Other performers include Bass/Baritone Calvin Griffin, Tenor Timothy Miller, the Meridian Chorale and soloists. [More details.](#)

Milnes Scholarship Application

The Milnes Fund of Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC, was established in 1996 through a bequest from Jack and Marjory Milnes to provide scholarships for individuals studying to become ministers in the United Church of Christ.

To apply for a scholarship, please submit the following:

1. current *curriculum vita* and
2. cover letter which:
 - a. includes a statement of ministerial philosophy;
 - b. outlines future hopes/plans for ministry in the United Church of Christ;
 - c. describes financial need; and
 - d. provides three references, including one from your pastor.

Award amount may be up to \$3,000. The application should be submitted by December 5, 2019 for the spring semester and should be sent

to Mail@Pilgrim-Church.com in the subject line please put Attn: Milnes Scholarship or via postal mail to Ministry Commission Chair; Pilgrim Congregational Church, UCC; 400 Glenwood Drive; Chattanooga, TN 37404; Phone: 423-698-5682. For additional information, you may contact Pilgrim Church.

Training and Learning Opportunities



Save the Date
Blowing Rock
Conference Center
Winter Youth Retreat

Guest Speaker
Alicia Crosby

with music by
Ocean Elizabeth

January 17th-20th
register at uccwinteryouthretreat.org

Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders

(MSTI)

The Lombard Mennonite Peace Center is once again offering Mediation Skills Training Institute for Church Leaders (MSTI) from March 23-27, 2020. This course is for pastors and other church leaders interested in learning skills to help them deal more effectively with interpersonal, congregational, and other forms of group conflict. It will be held at Grace Presbyterian Church in Fort Mill, SC (near Charlotte, NC). Please note that those who register no later than February 21, 2020, will receive a \$200 discount off their tuition. For more information please contact the Lombard Mennonite Peace Center at 630-627-0507 or admin@LMPeaceCenter.org. To register online please go to <https://www.brownpapertickets.com/event/4316493>.

Back Bay Mission Trip Information Session

Friday, November 22, 2019 at Pleasant Hill Community Church is an opportunity to find out more about the upcoming Nov 8-14, 2020, work camp mission trip to Back Bay Mission in Biloxi MS. The information session is for anyone wanting to know more; if you attend you are not required to make the trip. A first planning session for the trip will take place in January. In February a \$100 deposit per person (towards a total of \$250) will start the mission trip process by meeting together regularly and learning about the guidelines provided by Back Bay Mission.

Courageous Faith Virtual Summit

Faith leaders stand at a crossroads in North America today. As people of faith and moral conscious, we can either sit idly by and allow hate, greed, and fear to define us or we can channel the heart of our tradition and speak truth to greedy power, love to angry hate, and hope to unfounded fear. The Courageous Faith Summit provides a critical look at where we are now and how we get to a more sustainable and equitable future. Through interviews with influential North American faith leaders in activist-oriented congregations, the event will equip virtual leaders with the audacity, connections, and practice advice to be active leaders in an emerging movement for change. This online event will take place March 9-20, 2020, with 40 presenters providing 25+ hours of content, all online. [Learn more](#).

Conference Calendar

Healthy Boundaries 201

November 5 @ 9:00 am - 4:00 pm EST
Ray of Hope Christian Church, Decatur GA

Board of Directors Meeting

November 7 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST

Installation of Rev. Brian Byrne

November 10 @ 11:00 am - 12:00 pm CST
United Church of Huntsville, Huntsville AL

Annual Meeting Planning Session

November 11 @ 7:00 pm - 8:30 pm EST
Online Virtual Meeting

UCC Middle Tennessee Pastor Gathering

November 14 @ 6:00 pm - 8:00 pm CST
Howard Congregational Church, Nashville, TN

Commission on Ministry Retreat

Nov. 15-16, 2019
Beloved UCC, Birmingham, AL

Ordination of Stephanie Milton

November 17 @ 3:00 pm - 4:00 pm EST
First Congregational Church, Atlanta, GA

Council of Conference Ministers

November 19 - November 22
Birmingham, Alabama

Staff Meeting

November 26 @ 9:00 am - 10:30 am EST
Online Virtual Meeting

Annual Meeting Planning Session

December 9 - November 10
Community Congregational Church, Birmingham AL

Winter Youth Retreat

January 17, 2020 - January 20, 2020
Blowing Rock Conference Center, Blowing Rock NC

MID Retreat

January 31, 2020 - February 1, 2020
Atlanta, GA (location TBD)

SEC Clergy Retreat

March 8-10, 2020
Monteagle, TN

SEC Annual Meeting

June 19-20, 2020
Montgomery, AL

National Youth Event

July 22-25, 2020
Purdue University, IN

Contact Us

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Assoc. Conference Minister: **Rev. Heather Fosburgh**; hbardole@secucc.org

Generosity Coordinator: **Min. Carrole Moss**; cmoss@secucc.org

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